
Collection number: Mss 34

Department of Special Collections, Davidson Library, University of California, Santa Barbara

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Descriptive Summary

Title: John B. Sanford/Robert W. Smith Collection
Date (inclusive): ca. 1982-1991
Collection Number: Mss 34
Creator: Sanford, John B., 1904-
Extent: .4 linear feet (1 box)
Repository: University of California, Santa Barbara. Library. Department of Special Collections
Santa Barbara, California 93106-9010
Physical Location: Del Sur
Language: English.
Access Restrictions
None.
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Acquisition Information
Purchase, 1999.

Biography
John B. Sanford, born Julian L. Shapiro in New York in 1904, studied to become a lawyer until his friend, the author Nathanael West, encouraged him to take up writing. In the summer of 1931, they retreated to a cabin in the forests of the Adirondacks, where Shapiro completed his first novel, The Water Wheel. Following its publication in 1933, he adopted the name of the book's protagonist as his pen name, which he then made his legal name in 1940. The critical success of his
second novel, *The Old Man's Place* (1935), led to a script-writing job in Hollywood, where he met his wife, screenwriter Marguerite Roberts. Having already established a successful career for herself, Roberts offered to support Sanford so he could return to writing novels.

Sanford had produced three more novels when, in 1951, he and his wife were called before the Communist-hunting House Committee on Un-American Activities, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Both Sanford and Roberts refused to testify and were subsequently blacklisted. Overcome by guilt that his left-wing politics had derailed his wife's career, Sanford wrote nothing until Hollywood began accepting screenplays from her again in the 1960s. He soon abandoned fiction, however, and produced his acclaimed *A More Goodly Country: A Personal History of America* (1975), followed by the autobiographical series *Scenes from the Life of an American Jew* (1985-1991).

In 1982, Black Sparrow Press of Santa Barbara reissued Sanford's novel *A Man without Shoes*, which had failed miserably when first released in 1951. The book came to the attention of freelance book reviewer Robert W. Smith, a former CIA officer who had published numerous books and articles on Asian martial arts, on which he was an acknowledged expert. Smith began a correspondence with Sanford, and within months they had become fast friends. Smith took it upon himself to resuscitate Sanford’s literary reputation and wrote glowing reviews of Sanford’s books as they came out, even lobbying *The New York Times Book Review* to be assigned Sanford’s *The Winters of That Country* (1984). Although the *Times* turned him down, Smith was able to place articles and reviews in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and the *Washington Post*.

Both flattered and grateful for the attention Smith had brought his work, Sanford maintained a cheery correspondence for several years, but their relationship began to change upon the death of Sanford's wife Maggie. Devastated by the loss, Sanford began to withdraw into himself, trying to lose himself in his writing. Then, in the spring of 1991, Smith wrote a review of the final volume of Sanford's autobiography, *The Season, It Was Winter*, which Sanford felt denigrated his wife's talent as a writer. With two terse notes, Sanford terminated their friendship. Shortly afterward, Robert W. Smith stopped writing book reviews.

**Scope and Content of Collection**

The collection contains material sent by John B. Sanford to Robert W. Smith, including correspondence, typescript drafts of articles/shorter works, and photocopies of reviews of Sanford's books from various newspapers, as well as other materials Smith had collected regarding Sanford.

**Related Materials**

At UCSB:

The Department of Special Collections also has copies of John Sanford's books, including advance copies, and signed, first editions. These are cataloged individually and can be searched in Pegasus, the UCSB Libraries online catalog.

At Other Institutions:

Boston University has the bulk of John Sanford and Marguerite Roberts' papers.

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**Series 1. General**

- **Box 1: 1**
  - Address by John Sanford on accepting an award from the Santa Barbara Writers Conference, June 21, 1986
- **Box 1: 2**
  - Articles (about JS), 1986
- **Box 1: 3**
  - John Sanford: An American Classic (transcript of an interview of JS by Robert W. Smith), 1984
- **Box 1: 4**
  - Kunstler, William - "I Write Because I Want To" (typescript copy), [ca. latter 1980s]
- **Box 1: 5**
  - Roberts, Marguerite (wife of JS - includes obituary and copy of a document establishing screenwriting award in her name, at USC), 1989, 1990

**Series 2. Correspondence**

- **Box 1: 6**
  - To Sanford [1982-1989]
- **Box 1: 7 - 17**
  - From Sanford to Robert W. Smith
- **Box 1: 8**
  - List (by Smith; includes correspondence and typescript drafts by JS)
  - 1982 (8 items)
- **Box 1: 9**
  - 1983 (8 items)
- **Box 1: 10**
  - 1984 (8 items)
Abstract: [Says in one letter, 5 Apr. 1991, that he can't see continuing the chronological approach in a vol. 6 of Scenes, just too old for that, but proceeding with memoirs, that can jump back and forth in time; 26 Apr. 1991, says he has sent off first 325 pp. of Memoir to John Martin and asking if he will publish it.]

Box 1: 18  No date (2 items)
Series 3.  Writings

Box 1: 19  The Color of the Air: Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 1 (reviews and publicity)
Box 1: 20  The Waters of Darkness: Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 2 (reviews)
Box 1: 21  A Very Good Land to Fall With: Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 3 (reviews)
Box 1: 22  A Walk in the Fire: Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 4 (reviews)
Box 1: 22  The Season, It Was Winter: Scenes from the Life of an American Jew, Volume 5
Box 1: 23  Foreword, 1990
Box 1: 24  William Carlos Williams - John Sanford: A Correspondence (reviews)
Box 1: 25  Winters of That Country: Tales of the Man Made Seasons (op ed piece in newspaper)

Series 4.  Typescript Drafts

Scope and Content Note
Copies sent to RWS; versions of some, e.g. the pieces on the Sacco and Vanzetti jury, Ty Cobb, Charlie Chaplin, Thomas Wolfe, Richard Nixon, Billy Graham, George Patton, Jr., Truman Capote, and Oliver North, appear in Maggie: A Love Story; others, e.g. the pieces on Roy Cohn, Fidel Castro, and J. Robert Oppenheimer, appear in Intruders in Paradise.

Box 1: 27  Ars Longa: Truman Capote, 1924-1984, 1990
Box 1: 29  Christian Soldier: Oliver Laurence North, 1941- , 1990
Box 1: 31  Frank Wills: The Watergate Break-In, 17 June 1972, 1989
Box 1: 32  The Hidalgo: Fidel Castro, 1926- , n.d.
Box 1: 33  His Soul Was Not Left in Hell: William F. 'Billy' Graham, 1918- , [1990]
Box 1: 34  I Have Blood on My Hands, he said: J. Robert Oppenheimer, 1904-67, n.d.
Box 1: 35  The International Sport: Ernest Hemingway, 1899-1961, n.d.
Box 1: 36  Jack: Richard Milhous Nixon, 1913- , 1990
Box 1: 37  Joe McCarthy and Another Joe: The Army-McCarthy Hearings, 1954 (includes saying this is for volume 5, of Scenes), n.d.
Box 1: 38  Junker: George Patton, Jr., 1885-1945, 1990
Box 1: 39  A Last Stand on Last Stand Hill: The Little Big Horn, 1988, n.d.
Box 1: 40  A Long Season of Rain: Katherine Anne Porter, 1890-1920, n.d.
Box 1: 41  The Lowlife: Roy Cohn, 1927-1986, n.d.
Box 1: 42  A Middle-Aged Jewish Woman: Thomas Wolfe, 1900-38, n.d.
Box 1: 43  Money Is the Root of All Eval, he wrote: Henry Ford, 1863-1947, 1990
Box 1: 44  The National Game: Ty Cobb, 1886-1961, 1990
Box 1: 45  The No-Spikka Peoples: Ellis Island, 1892-1954, n.d.
Box 1: 46  Of One Who Blew the Gaff: Ella Kazan, 1909- . n.d.
Box 1: 47  Picture-Writing and Other Pictures: John and Marguerite Sanford, European Trip: Scene 3: April-August 1952 (old version), n.d.
| Box 1: 48 | The Poor Get Screwed, he said: Augusto Cesar Sandino, 1895-1934, n.d. |
| Box 1: 49 | La Revolucion Agraria, in photographs: Mexico, 1910- , n.d. |
| Box 1: 50 | St. Thomas, an assumed name: Emily Hale, 1891-1969, n.d. |
| Box 1: 51 | Twelve Good Men and True: The Sacco and Vanzetti Jury, 1921, [1990] |
| Box 1: 52 | With the Instinct of My Race: Matthew Henson, 1866-1955, [1990] |
| Box 1: 53 | Foreword in the form of a Memoir (with note saying this was submitted to Capra Press, and markings in red are by the Capra editor) |